

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ comprising:

an elongated hollow tube housing with a fixed length that resists axial compression and does not contain any liquid;

an elongated member disposed within said elongated hollow tube housing; and  
a protective covering enclosing said elongated hollow tube housing with said elongated member;

wherein the packaging ~~means~~ protects the elongated member from being axially compressed and contaminated.

Claim 2 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 1, wherein said elongated hollow tube housing is slightly longer than said elongated member.

Claim 3 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 1, wherein said elongated hollow tube housing has a first end and a second end wherein the first end is sealed.

Claim 4 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 1, wherein said protective covering has a notch formed at one or more of its edges to allow easy opening of the protective covering.

Claim 5 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 1, wherein said protective covering is made of paper, plastic, or aluminum foil.

Claim 6 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 3, wherein said protective covering is made of paper, plastic, or aluminum foil.

Claim 7 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ comprising:

an elongated hollow tube housing with a fixed length that resists axial compression and does not contain any liquid;

a swab applicator disposed within said elongated hollow tube housing; and  
a protective covering enclosing said elongated hollow tube housing with said swab applicator;

wherein the packaging ~~means~~ protects the swab applicator from being axially compressed and contaminated.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 7, wherein said elongated hollow tube housing is slightly longer than said elongated member.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 7, wherein said elongated hollow tube housing has a first end and a second end wherein the first end is sealed.

Claim 10 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 7, wherein said protective covering has a notch formed at one or more of its edges to allow easy opening of the protective covering.

Claim 11 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 7, wherein said protective covering is made of paper, plastic, or aluminum foil.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ as in claim 9, wherein said protective covering is made of paper, plastic, or aluminum foil.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A packaging ~~means~~ comprising:

an elongated hollow tube housing with a fixed length that resists axial compression and does not contain any liquid and with a first end and a second end wherein the first end is sealed;

a swab applicator with a handle and an absorbent tip disposed within said elongated hollow tube housing with the absorbent tip disposed near said sealed end of said elongated hollow tube housing; and

a protective covering enclosing said elongated hollow tube housing with said swab applicator;

wherein the packaging ~~means~~ protects the swab applicator from being axially compressed and contaminated.